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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

The National Museum of the United States Air Force located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, is the service's national institution for preserving and presenting the Air Force story. Each year more than one million visitors come to the museum to learn about the mission, history and evolving capabilities of America's Air Force.

The museum is the world's largest and oldest military aviation museum featuring more than 300 aircraft, missiles and aerospace vehicles amid more than 17 acres of indoor exhibit space. Thousands of personal artifacts, photographs and documents further highlight the people and events that comprise the Air Force storyline, from the beginnings of military flight to today's war on terrorism.

Museum Operations

The U.S. Air Force operates the museum complex. The commander of the Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base maintains operational oversight of the museum, with the History Office of the Secretary of the Air Force in Washington, D.C., providing policy guidance.

Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Charles D. Metcalf serves as director and Mr. Terry Aitken as senior curator. The museum staff of 96 permanent federal civil service employees work across a variety of areas, including exhibits, collection, research, aircraft restoration, operations, education, special events, planning, public affairs and administration. About 450 volunteers provide an important contribution in diverse areas from greeting and assisting visitors to leading tours and helping restore aircraft.

Galleries

The museum's galleries present many rare and one-of-a-kind aircraft and aerospace vehicles and thousands of historical items that chronicle the evolution of military flight from the Wright brothers to the B-2 stealth bomber. Sensory-rich exhibits featuring mannequins, artifacts, sound effects and theatrical lighting place aircraft in context and bring history to life by dramatizing and personalizing the events depicted. Visitors walking through the museum can view multiple galleries focusing on the various eras of military aviation and Air Force history, including World War I, World War II, Korea, Southeast Asia, the Cold War and the present.

Aircraft

A number of popular and historically significant aircraft headline the museum's growing collection. Particularly noteworthy aircraft from the early years include a rare SPAD XIII, Caproni CA 36 bomber and an MB-2 bomber. The World War II collection includes the B-29 "Bockscar" that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, along with a P-51 and Japanese Zero. The F-86 and MiG-15 help represent the Korean War, with the F-4 among Vietnam standouts.

Modern favorites include the B-52, B-1, F-15, F-16, F-117 stealth fighter, the Predator and Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicles, the F-22A Raptor prototype and the world's only permanent public exhibit of a B-2 stealth bomber.

The museum features a world-class collection of presidential aircraft, including SAM (Special Air Mission) 26000, a Boeing VC-137C that served as President John F. Kennedy's Air Force One.

Education and Events

Animating the Air Force story, the museum offers a wide variety of special events and educational programs to connect the service with the public. Through its education office, the museum reaches more than 97,000 students, teachers and family members each year with hands-on learning activities, workshops, tours and curriculum materials. In doing so, the museum helps inspire tomorrow's airmen and cultivates future airpower advocates.

The museum manages nearly 800 special events a year. Favorites include the bi-annual Dawn Patrol Rendezvous World War I Fly-In, the annual Radio-Controlled Model Aircraft Air Show, outdoor and indoor concerts featuring the Air Force Band of Flight, the "Wings and Things" Guest Lecture Series and more.

History

The National Museum of the United States Air Force traces its birth to 1923 at McCook Field near Dayton; it moved to Wright Field in 1927. The museum closed from 1940 to 1955 due to urgent need for administrative space to support the war effort.

In 1960 local interest in aviation history led to the creation of the Air Force Museum Foundation, Inc., to secure funds for the museum. A nationwide fund-raising campaign resulted in the construction of a new \$6 million facility in the late 1960s, with President Richard Nixon dedicating the new building in September 1971. In 1976 the Foundation donated a \$1 million addition to the building, and in 1988 the Foundation and federal government funded equally a major \$10.8 million expansion. The IMAX Theatre and atrium, a \$7.3 million project funded by the Foundation, opened in 1991. In 2003 the museum opened the \$22.7 million, 200,000 square-foot Eugene W. Kettering Building housing a Cold War Gallery. The third building is the centerpiece of a major, multi-phase expansion. The latest addition, a \$3.2 million Missile and Space Gallery constructed as a missile silo, opened in 2004.

Foundation

The Air Force Museum Foundation, Inc., was established in 1960 as a philanthropic, non-profit organization to assist the museum when federal funds are not available. Since its inception, the foundation has contributed more than \$45 million for museum construction, expansion and facility upgrades. The foundation operates the museum's souvenir shop, IMAX Theatre, cafeteria and Morphis MovieRide Simulator. It receives its funds primarily through the operation of these activities as well as through foundation membership, donations and bequests. Its Web site is www.afmuseum.com.

Location, Hours and Web Site

The museum is located six miles northeast of Dayton, accessed easily off Interstate 70 and 75 to Interstate 675, exit 15, which is the Colonel Glenn Highway exit.

The museum is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Parking and admission are free; however, there is a charge for the IMAX Theatre.

For more information, visit the museum on the Web at www.wpafb.af.mil/museum.

Point of Contact

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